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Congress of the United States
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**COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

March 12, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

I write to express my grave concerns regarding our capacity to test individuals for the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Given inconsistent guidance and use of COVID-19 tests across our nation, I ask that you provide clarity and improve access to such testing throughout the United States immediately.

In my congressional district, it is my understanding that the County's public health agency has limited testing capacity and been using narrow testing criteria, including individuals who develop symptoms within two weeks of returning from a country of risk, individuals with symptoms who have had contact with a confirmed COVID-19 patient, and certain individuals hospitalized with pneumonia. At ground zero of this pandemic in the United States, there have been many reports regarding delays in testing residents, workers, and first responders at the Life Care Center in Kirkland, Washington.

While many communities still have only limited access or capacity to test for COVID-19 and federal guidance has caused confusion for many state and local agencies, it appears that certain individuals, including some Members of Congress and the entire Utah Jazz basketball team, have been able to receive testing after contact with a COVID-19 patient regardless of whether they were displaying any symptoms.

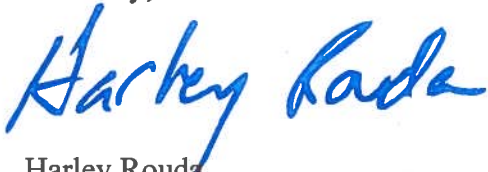
These delays and limited, disparate use of COVID-19 testing has made it impossible to have a clear understanding of this disease's spread in our communities. This is especially concerning as other nations have been able to increase their testing capacity at an exponentially faster rate.

I have heard from constituents, including health care workers and first responders on the front lines of this pandemic, who have expressed their concerns about their safety and ability to limit the spread of COVID-19 without adequate testing and data. We must ensure that these individuals have the tools they need to do their jobs and protect Americans, especially at-risk populations.

It is incumbent on all of us to come together to expedite and improve access to testing as well as provide clear guidance for our communities so that we can sufficiently respond and mitigate the impact of this outbreak. That is why I voted for the bipartisan supplemental appropriations bill, that provided billions of dollars for the Department to scale up such efforts. I request detailed information about your plans to use these funds appropriated by Congress to work with public and private sector partners to ensure that all Americans have access to this critical testing and improve our understanding the spread of COVID-19 throughout the United States.

As I have noted previously, I am deeply committed to working with you to keep our communities informed and to strengthen public health and safety. I appreciate the opportunity to receive a briefing at the Secretary's Operations Center and the willingness of federal officials to testify before the House Oversight Committee this week. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Harley Rouda". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Harley" and last name "Rouda" clearly distinguishable.

Harley Rouda
Member of Congress

CC: Robert Kadlec, M.D., MTM&H, M.S., Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response
Robert R. Redfield, M.D., Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention